



# ***INSIGHT***

***Trial Exam Paper***

## **2011**

# **ENGLISH LANGUAGE**

## **Written examination**

***Sample responses***

**This book presents:**

- correct sample responses
- tips
- mark allocations

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## SECTION 1 – Written Text

### Text 1: Questions 1 – 6

#### Question 1

- a. Identify the function of this text.

1 mark

#### Sample Response

The function of this text is informative – to inform readers about VELs.

#### Mark Allocation

- 1 mark for identifying the function

- b. Explain how the use of sentence type supports this function. Provide an example from the text.

2 marks

#### Sample Response

This text consists solely of declarative sentences, e.g., ‘An explicit focus on thinking...’ (Line 13). This sentence type supports the informative function of the text as declaratives are used for making statements, often factual in nature.

#### Mark Allocation

- 1 mark for an appropriate explanation
- 1 mark for a correct example

## Question 2

Identify **two** examples of nominalisation and discuss how they support the tone and formality of the text.

4 marks

### Sample Response

Nominalisation is frequent in this document. Examples may include any of the following:

- ‘focus’ as a noun rather than as an active verb ‘to focus’ (e.g., Line 13 ‘An explicit focus’ and Line 24 ‘A focus’)
- ‘thinking’ rather than ‘to think’ (e.g., Line 3)
- ‘the development of...thinking competencies’ (Line 24) or ‘higher-order processes’ (Line 16) rather than ‘to develop’
- ‘the exploration of’ (Line 6) from ‘to explore’
- ‘engaged in sustained discussion’ (Line 21) from ‘to discuss’
- ‘the teaching of’ (Line 13) from ‘to teach’
- ‘reasoning’ (Line 5) from ‘to reason’
- ‘creative problem solving, decision making and conceptualising’ (Line 17) – nominalisation here allows for listing to occur

Nominalisation refers to the process of forming a noun from some other part of speech. It also includes the process of turning whole clauses into noun phrases.

In this text, the frequent use of nominalisation creates a tone that tends towards being impersonal, detached, abstract and bureaucratic. It also creates a more formal register (the distance between the reader and the text) and a sense of authority and complexity.

Nominalisation also encourages readers to focus on concepts rather than actions. Completely removing the active verb agent (the thing *performing* the action) from the sentence makes the action appear inevitable or unavoidable (as a noun), and shifts the focus away from the person(s) responsible for the changes to the curriculum.

### Mark Allocation

- 2 marks for correct examples
- 2 marks for discussion

### Tip

*It is worth pointing out exactly which part of your response contains the nominalisation example. So rather than quoting a phrase, or a Line number, underline it, or quote the nominalisation by converting back to a verb.*

**SECTION 1 – continued**  
**TURN OVER**

### Question 3

- a. Identify an example of jargon in this text.

1 mark

#### Sample Response

The lexis in this text is dominated by bureaucratic/educational/psychological jargon, often referred to as ‘buzz words’. Examples may include: ‘cognitive’ (Line 10); ‘metacognitive’ (Line 11); ‘conceptualising’ (Line 17); ‘core integrative function’ (Line 25); and ‘taxonomies’ (Line 31).

#### Mark Allocation

- 1 mark for a correct example

- b. Comment on the ways in which the use of jargon may affect the coherence of this text.

2 marks

#### Sample Response

The text makes use of specific educational jargon that the primary audience (teachers and principals) should be familiar with as part of their profession. It allows for complex, specialised ideas to be conveyed in a concise manner. This coherence, however, relies heavily on the audience being familiar with the jargon and thus able to use inference to access its meaning.

The jargon may also function to exclude other readers (such as parents and students) who are not familiar with some of the more complex jargon and thus cannot make the necessary inferences. In this case, the jargon would detract from the coherence of the text.

#### Mark Allocation

- 2 marks for discussing at least two ways in which jargon can affect coherence

### Question 4

Identify an example of the passive voice between Lines 24–34 and comment on how it relates to the information flow of the text.

3 marks

#### Sample Response

The passive voice is used in Line 31, ‘Many different taxonomies... have been developed’.

The passive voice functions to omit the agent (in this case avoiding naming *who* developed the taxonomies) and focus on the process or the outcome. The person responsible for the

action is not necessary information in this case. Hence, using the passive construction aids succinctness and directness of expression by choosing which information to emphasise when conveying the message.

### Mark Allocation

- 1 mark for a correct example
- 2 marks for an appropriate discussion of how passive voice affects information flow

### Question 5

Comment on the use of syntactic stylistic features in this text, giving examples to support your response.

4 marks

### Sample Response

Syntactic stylistic features include everything to do with the way the text is organised—structure, order and connection of sentences. They provide a cohesive syntactic structure, while serving to foreground the most relevant parts of the content. The overall effect is to create a powerful message with memorable quality.

In this text, the following **syntactic stylistic features** could be discussed:

- Listing
  - Features are listed – e.g., ‘cognitive, affective and metacognitive’ (Lines 10–11) – in order to emphasise the range of options and to allow for several ideas to be structured into a concise format.
  - At times nominalisation allows listing to occur, e.g., ‘creative problem solving, decision making and conceptualising’ (Line 17)
- Parallelism (Repetition of grammatical structure)
  - The repeated noun-conjunction-noun structure is used to emphasise the range of qualities present, e.g., ‘reasoning and inquiry’ ‘processing and evaluating’ ‘perceptions and possibilities’ (Lines 5–7)
- Antithesis
  - By structuring two contrasting/opposite ideas in a parallel structure – e.g., ‘strengths and weaknesses’ (Line 33) – the text is able to bring together and organise opposites, thus making them more memorable.

### Mark Allocation

- 2 marks for discussion of syntactic stylistic features in this text
- 2 marks for illustrating the discussion with examples from the text

### Question 6

Discuss the ways in which cohesion is achieved in this text. Give at least **three** examples to support your response.

5 marks

### Sample Response

Cohesion is achieved in this text in a number of ways. These include:

- Frequent lexical cohesion (links between content words), for example:
  - repetition of lexis, e.g., ‘students’ (L2,12,20,34) and ‘thinking’ (L1,8,13,14,19) in order to emphasise the most significant ideas in the text
  - use of synonyms or near-synonyms, e.g., ‘ideas’, ‘beliefs’ (Line 8)
  - antonymy, e.g., ‘strengths and weaknesses’ (Line 33)
  - collocation, e.g., ‘lower-order’ ‘higher-order’ (Lines 15, 16)
- Reference, for example:
  - Anaphoric reference is a cohesive technique that is often used to avoid repetition. A referent is replaced by a pronoun (usually personal or demonstrative) *later* in the text. Examples in this text include the referent ‘Students’ (Line 14) replaced by pronoun ‘they’ (Line 18) or ‘Thinking’ (Line 3) is replaced by ‘it’ (Lines 5,6,7).
  - The use of a definite determiner is another linguistic device that maintains referential cohesion. In this text ‘the’ (Line 10) also clearly establishes ‘thinking processes’ as the topic of the text.
- Ellipsis and substitution, which can enhance cohesion by establishing a link between the stated or inferred elements in the text, and the omitted or substituted elements. For example:
  - Lines 28–29 ‘[teachers] make their own thinking explicit’
  - Line 34 ‘all [systems] seek to improve the quality’
- Connecting adverbials and conjunctions can be used to express cohesive links with a preceding sentence. For example:
  - ‘in addition’ (Line 17) creates a logical progression from one sentence to another and links cohesively.

### Mark Allocation

- 2 marks for discussion of how cohesion is achieved in this text
- 3 marks for at least three correct examples of the devices discussed

### Tip

*In order to gain full marks students must do more than just provide a list of cohesive ties. It is important to expand on the features with a brief comment on how they work.*

Total 22 marks

**END OF SECTION 1**

## SECTION 2 – Spoken Text

### Text 2: Questions 7 – 13

#### Question 7

What is the purpose of the monologue in Lines 1–25?

1 mark

#### Sample Response

The purpose of Jennifer Byrne’s opening monologue is largely informative. It is a scripted introduction to the program, designed to give information about the guests and the books that will be discussed.

#### Mark Allocation

- 1 mark for identifying the purpose

#### Question 8

Comment on the conversational strategy used in Line 21 and how it functions within the discourse.

2 marks

#### Sample Response

The multiple discourse particles used by J in Line 21 (e.g., ‘Ok well now’) assist her in topic management. J shifts the focus of the text from the introductory section to open a new topic: the discussion of a specific book.

#### Mark Allocation

- 2 marks for a discussion of the strategy and its function

### Question 9

Comment on the discourse function of **two** different prosodic features in Line 8.

4 marks

#### Sample Response

J punctuates her speech with frequent prosodic features in order to engage her audience, both in the studio and watching at home. As the host, she also employs prosody to ensure the program runs smoothly and to emphasise her enthusiasm and passion for the subject matter.

Even though J's opening monologue is obviously scripted, on Line 8 she uses the following prosodic features to add further functionality to her utterance:

- loud volume (e.g., '<F Our first guest F>') is used to gain the attention of the audience and to be heard over the applause
- rising intonation and stress/primary accent (e.g. 'first' , '^born/') are used to emphasise the importance of these lexemes in the utterance; this may also function to hold the floor at the end of the utterance
- elongated vowel sounds (e.g., 'i=s') function to add interest and suspense as she begins to introduce her guest DBC Pierre, before she finally names him in Line 13.

#### Mark Allocation

- 2 marks for identification of prosodic features
- 2 marks for discussion of the discourse function of each of these features

### Question 10

Discuss the function of **two** different non-fluency features between Lines 51–61.

4 marks

#### Sample Response

Responses could comment on any of the following features:

- frequent pauses throughout, both long and short
- pause fillers (Line 52 'um')
- false start (Line 60 'an' the- er I jus')
- repetition (Line 52 'I was (.) I was growing up')
- repair or false start (Line 51 'I feel so...that's an incredibly important book')

These features function to assist D to clarify his utterances, or to plan what he is going to say next without ceding the floor to the other speakers. They affirm the fact that this section of the program is unscripted and spontaneous.



**Mark Allocation**

- 2 marks for identification of non-fluency features
- 2 marks for discussion of the discourse function of each of these features

**Question 11**

How is turn-taking influenced by the context of this text? Give specific examples of how turn-taking operates in the text.

4 marks

**Sample Response**

The context of this text is a television program, which affects how the participants negotiate the turn-taking. It follows a formula, to some extent, which is understood by all participants. While it is not scripted, each speaker knows they have a certain 'turn' which will be managed by the host.

J is clearly the host of the program and largely manages the turn-taking by naming the person who is meant to take the floor and opening adjacency pairs in order to explicitly pass the floor to them (Line 28 'Tell us why' or Line 46 'You- I was interested Pierre').

There is little breakdown or uncooperative overlap present, which is typical of the context, as it needs to run smoothly in order to maintain the audience's interest.

Speakers use minimal responses (or back-channelling) in order to support one another's turns and assist in the smooth turn-taking as this encourages a speaker to hold the floor. Examples can be found in Line 45 'mmm' and Lines 75–6 'mmm' 'yes'.

**Mark Allocation**

- 1 mark for identifying the context
- 2 marks for identifying turn-taking strategies
- 1 mark for discussion

**Question 12**

Identify the conversational strategy used in Line 99 and comment on its function in the discourse.

2 marks

**Sample Response**

V uses backchannelling ('Mmm') in order to support JS's turn without taking the floor from him.

**Mark Allocation**

- 2 marks for an appropriate discussion of the strategy and its function

**SECTION 2 – continued**  
**TURN OVER**

### Question 13

To what extent is this text formal? Refer to specific features that contribute to the level of formality of this text. Refer to at least **two** different subsystems.

6 marks

### Sample Response

This text does support the spontaneous nature of conversation to some extent, as shown through non-fluency features (such as false starts, e.g., Line 60 ‘an’ the- er I jus’). However, overall it is more formal than a typical spoken conversation because it is a television program. It is unclear how much of this text is being read from an autocue, but much of it does sound prepared. It is highly likely the speakers have considered what to say prior to the taping of the program, as they would have been aware in advance of the format and subject matter.

The text’s increased formality is supported by:

- an often complex and quite formal lexis, which adds an authoritative, credible tone to the speakers, e.g., ‘steadfast decency’, ‘overwhelming ignorance’, ‘gradual revelations’, ‘chilling insights into the human psyche’, ‘trepidation’ ‘cadged’. The lexis also includes literary jargon, e.g., ‘underpin’, ‘contentious’, ‘resonates’, and ‘tartan noir’.
- a relative lack of slang and informal lexis. Often more formal choices are made, such as Line 68 ‘contentious’ rather than ‘rude’ or ‘awful’ and Line 89 ‘loathed’ rather than ‘hated’.
- frequent use of subordination/complex sentence structure, e.g., Lines 8–9 ‘Our first guest is Australian born though determinedly a citizen of the world’ and Line 15 ‘her enviable sales...human psyche’.
- use of the passive voice, e.g., Line 3 ‘two great guests cadged from the Melbourne and Brisbane Writers Festivals’.
- a cohesive and coherent discourse that uses seemingly planned stylistic patterning, which adds to the formal structure of each guest’s utterances, such as V’s use of parallelism in Lines 30–32.
- an information flow in the introduction of guests; a deliberate choice is made to save the name until last and build up suspense.

On the other hand, there are some features that add to informality, such as slang lexis, e.g., ‘cracker’ (Line 2) and ‘piece of rubbish’ (Line 70).

### Mark Allocation

- 4 marks for a discussion of the features that contribute to the formality or informality of the text
- 2 marks for referring to at least two subsystems

Total 23 marks

**END OF SECTION 2**

## SECTION 3 – Essay

### Tip

*Students have a wide range of potential content material from which to select and will do best when they select a few representative, pertinent examples rather than attempting a more generalised discussion. Trying to cover the material too broadly will often result in a scattered, overly vague response. VCAA advice is that students can choose, if they so desire, to use only one of the prompts. They must use **at least one**.*

☐

**Question 14** Tick the box next to the question you are answering.

Language can be used to negotiate social relationships and to mark group boundaries. Discuss with reference to **two or more** subsystems.

- a. 'It's human nature to crave acceptance by the herd and it's also why membership in Australia's many tribes is dictated not just by your address and your clothes, but the way you speak. There's no surer sign you're a bogan, bushie, wog, homie, private school girl or gay man than adopting the distinct speech modulations of those groups. It's the performance of self; who you think you are.'  
**Sam de Brito, *The Age*, 9 February 2010, 'Accent: the performance of self'**
- b. 'Swearing is more than a way of expressing extreme, usually negative, emotion. It's a social adhesive that unites and binds us more than any other. Rich or poor, east or west, Collingwood supporter or Doggies fan; it's something we all share – a great equaliser. It opens people up, cements relationships.'  
**Michael Stuchbery, *The Age*, 2 June 2011, 'A curse on both houses'** (an article in response to Victoria's renewal of the anti-swearing legislation)
- c. 'We are quick to demean anyone who tries to be part of our group without being prepared to take on its jargon. And we resent it when some other group, sensing our lack of linguistic awareness, refuses to let us in.'  
**David Crystal**
- d. 'Why don't people just say what they mean? The reason is that conversational partners are not modems downloading information into each other's brains. People are very, very touchy about their relationships. Whenever you speak to someone, you are presuming the two of you have a certain degree of familiarity – which your words might alter. So every sentence has to do two things at once: convey a message and continue to negotiate that relationship. The clearest example is ordinary politeness. When you are at a dinner party and want the salt, you don't blurt out, "Gimme the salt." Rather, you use what linguists call a whimperative, as in "Do you think you could pass the salt?" or "If you could pass the salt, that would be awesome."  
**Steven Pinker, *Time Magazine*, 6 September 2007, 'Words Don't Mean What They Mean'**

## Sample Response

This topic has two components and both of these ideas need to be fully addressed. Students should address both how language is used to negotiate social relationships and how language is used to mark group boundaries.

How language is used to negotiate social relationships relates to the ways in which language can define, maintain or reinforce our relationships with others. It is advisable that students would make some link between language and the status of a relationship, and the purpose and context of an interaction.

Some possible ideas students may explore are:

- Politeness and social distance – the choice between positive and negative politeness strategies according to the social distance between speakers. Politeness strategies also link to power relationships, level of respect required, and level of familiarity/intimacy. It is also relevant to consider the desired outcomes of an interaction and the strategies that speakers use to attain their goal. It is strongly recommended that students use original examples to illustrate the different politeness strategies and precise metalanguage to analyse their examples.
- Reference to specific Politeness Studies may be an advantage here:
  - Mulder et al attribute linguistic politeness to ‘selecting language that express[es] the appropriate degree of social distance.’
  - Penelope Brown and Steve Levinson further developed sociologist Erving Goffman’s concept of ‘face’, raising the idea that when people interact, they are worried about maintaining ‘face’. Brown and Levinson categorise this into ‘negative face’ (wanting to operate individually and without impediment) and ‘positive face’ (the desire to be approved). Thus politeness is centred on not threatening someone’s ‘face’ when communicating.
  - Longman states, ‘The relative social distance between the speaker and the addressee is one of the most basic factors determining appropriate levels of polite behaviour in most, if not all societies.’
  - Nessa Wolfson argues that relationships between acquaintances are ‘dynamic and open to negotiation’, meaning that speakers are able to adjust their language deliberately.
- Negative Politeness strategies – to emphasise the presence of social distance or higher social status requiring some level of respect, negative politeness strategies are often employed. Negative politeness may also indicate a desire to avoid becoming closer to someone and thus emphasise the social distance between speakers. Specific strategies include:
  - honorific modes of address, such as ‘Doctor’, ‘Sir’ or ‘Madam’ as well as formal greetings, such as ‘Good evening’
  - modal verbs, e.g., ‘Could I please...’ or ‘Would you mind...’
  - various politeness markers, such as ‘please’ and ‘thank you’
  - more formal syntax and lexicon ‘How are you this morning?’
  - euphemisms ‘you look well’ (after illness)

- hedging devices, e.g., ‘sort of’
- Positive Politeness strategies – with friends and family, or those with whom we share some intimacy, we often employ positive politeness in our interactions, for example:
  - frequent ellipsis, e.g., ‘Tomorrow, yeah?’
  - compliments, e.g., ‘looking good!’
  - nicknames (‘Bazza’, ‘M-dog’, ‘Noodle’)
  - informal greetings and lexicon, e.g., ‘Sup mate’
  - morphological elements, such as contractions like ‘let’s’
  - minimal responses, such as ‘mmm’.
  - terms of endearment (‘mate’, ‘honey’, ‘sweetie’)
  - various dysphemistic terms (‘bitch’, ‘slut’) are often reclaimed for use as terms of endearment. Although offensive in many contexts, these are deemed also as positive politeness when used with friends of close relationships – perhaps for this very reason (also a relevant point to mention when discussing ways of strengthening group solidarity).

Students should also discuss how language is used to mark group boundaries. Group boundaries can be marked by using in-group (inclusive) language to emphasise that you fit in and/or exclusive language to ensure that others don’t gain access through understanding. Note that it is advisable in a topic requiring a discussion of slang and jargon that students try to provide original examples.

There are several linguistic tools that mark group boundaries, including:

- Phonology/accent (Broad/General/Cultivated or Ethnocultural/Aboriginal English varieties)
- Lexicon (slang, jargon, dysphemistic language, code switching)
- Swearing, anti-social behaviour and outbursts of emotional language can mark group solidarity, as it expresses mutual contempt for social conventions, e.g., ‘Fuck that!’ or ‘This is fucking bullshit!’

### **A sample student discussion of jargon and slang:**

Jargon is specialised or technical language used within a trade, profession or other group that shares common knowledge or interests and can exclude as well as include people. Although it has connotations of being ‘obscure and often pretentious language’, it is also ubiquitous and is considered ‘an essential part of the network of occupations and pursuits which make up society’ (David Crystal). Jargon can satisfy the communication needs of a group as well as promote economy and precision of expression, thus unifying members of a certain group. Surgeons, for example, would use medical jargon like ‘atropine’ (a drug to increase the heart rate) during an operation to make sure all procedures are clearly understood and conducted correctly to avoid any mishaps. On the other hand, speakers can use jargon to create an impenetrable wall; outsiders who lack knowledge of a certain domain find it hard to comprehend the language being used. Political statements with copious amounts of jargon, such as ‘double devolution’, ‘holistic governance’ and ‘provider vehicles’, are usually criticised and labelled as ‘gobbledegook’, because they cause a verbal blockade between the general public and politicians.

Slang is an informal or colloquial register that is usually associated with a particular social group or historical period. Because it is bound by time and generation, it is widely used to express group boundaries or in-group identity by employing lexemes that are only understood by the 'in' group and not by others. Teen and young adult slang is a perfect example of how slang is used to serve this identifying function. For example, nowadays the lexeme 'sweet' is used as a good quality adjective to describe an event or a situation that seems enjoyable and/or worthwhile and can also act as a term of agreement. This slang word is also an example of semantic broadening, as the lexeme no longer describes only sugary foods or an agreeable disposition. Other slang lexemes that show agreement or understanding include: 'hells yeah', 'true', 'alrighty', and 'for the win'. In addition, young males can be observed using lexemes such as 'deck' in sentences such as 'deck a guy in soccer' meaning to knock over through physical contact, or 'asshat', which is purely a creative word (or 'neologism') used to insult someone. Another trend in younger generation's slang is the non-standard suffixation of the bound morpheme 'ness' at the end of some lexemes, e.g., 'awesomeness' and 'epicness'. All these characteristics of this slang create a barrier between this generation and others. Furthermore, because slang is transient/ephemeral, certain vocabulary is associated with particular time frames, for example, 'Shindig' (a festive gathering) and 'skippy' (a kangaroo meat dish) are old Australian expressions that are no longer used in contemporary Australian English. Hence, only older people who grew up in Australia can recognise and utilise such slang, which may promote solidarity among that generation.

OR

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**Question 15** Tick the box next to the question you are answering.

Language has the power to expose outdated values and influence social change. Discuss.

- a. 'Language both reflects and shapes social reality. Language is a major vehicle for the expression of prejudice or discrimination. Discriminatory language devalues or demeans individuals or groups of people. It is therefore both a symptom of, and a contributor to, the unequal social status of women, people with disabilities, and people from various ethnic and racial backgrounds.'

**The University of Newcastle Inclusive Language Guideline, 31 Jan 2006**

- b. Andrew Johns, assistant coach of the Parramatta Eels rugby team, called an Aboriginal player a 'black c\*\*t' but 'denied that he was racist'  
Mal Brown, an Australian rules footballer, described Aboriginal people as 'cannibals' but 'declared himself... not racist.'

**Koori Mail 479, p. 5**

(<http://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/people/racism.html>)

- c. 'One of the great things about free speech is that when racists can say what they really think, the public realise how disgusting they are. It's when the law makes them clean up their act that they appear more reasonable and electable.'

**Geoffrey Robertson, *Sunday Life Sun-Herald Magazine*, 'Hypothetically speaking', 8 February 2009, p.17**

- d. 'At the Egalia preschool in Stockholm, gendered pronouns are out. Staff avoid using words such as *him* or *her* and address the 33 children as *friends* rather than girls and boys. Instead, they've adopted the genderless neologism *hen*, used in some feminist and gay circles. "We use the word *hen* when a doctor, police, electrician or plumber or such is coming to the kindergarten," Ms Rajalin says. "We just say, *Hen is coming around 2pm*. Then children can imagine both a man or a woman. This widens their view.'"

***The Age*, 'Swedish preschool neutralises stereotypes with gender-free agenda', 28 June 2011**

### Sample Response

This topic lends itself to a discussion of language change over time, with particular reference to changing social expectations and values. It is also linked to a discussion of the power of language to influence a change in values, or to reflect current social values.

Students may discuss how language can reveal past values:

- By observing the shifting taboos through history (religion → bodily functions & sex → discrimination based on gender, race, religion, sexuality) we can see the change in social values and expectations in different eras, which is subsequently reflected in the choice of language that avoids taboos (i.e. euphemism).
- We can observe outdated language choices that seem unacceptable to our modern sensibility:
  - Racial discrimination (Enid Blyton's use of racist, sexist, 'classist' themes in her original children's stories)
  - Australian Immigration Minister and White Australia policy supporter Arthur Calwell's comment that 'Two Wongs don't make a White'
  - An internet forum post on Enid Blyton's use of golliwog characters: 'Of course blackface is racist. Of course having one blackface character looking after a car and others trying to steal it is racist. It's subtle, but it's there. People that suggest that children don't understand racism and it is adults assigning those values to stories are forgetting that children grow into adults, and the things that they perceive as normal—including racist viewpoints—are what they can carry with them into adulthood. At the time when the original books were written, those sorts of stereotypes were acceptable. Now, even though they still appear in certain media, they're not.' ~ Angela of Sydney, posted at 9:48 PM October 18, 2009 (discussing Noddy)
- Similarly, language that may have been taboo in the past is now frequently used in several public realms:
  - The line 'Not bloody likely!' was a risk to the actor's career when used on stage in George Bernard Shaw's 1912 play *Pygmalion*. Similarly, in the 1939 film *Gone with the Wind*, Clarke Gable's Line 'Frankly my dear, I don't give a damn' was seen as a profanity at the time.
  - Religious terms, e.g., a Tourism Campaign using the phrase 'Where the bloody hell are you?'
  - Bodily functions and sex, e.g., Tony Abbott's 'Shit happens', Gordon Ramsay's 'The F Word', and the clothing brand 'FCUK.'

Students may also address how language can shape future social change:

- Political correctness (PC) – changes to language to more aptly reflect contemporary social values. Non-discriminatory alternatives are designed to combat linguistic discrimination and thus influence social values and beliefs.
- The changing nature of politically correct language – in contemporary Australia the use of gender-biased terms 'chairman', or generic male pronoun 'he', gratuitous specification ('female doctor' or 'lesbian nurse'), irrelevant information leading to stereotyping ('Indian-born terrorist suspect'), invisibility by omission ('the arrival of Australians in 1788'), and otherwise dysphemistic terms, such as 'retard', are considered taboo. Thus, speakers are often cautious to use gender-neutral terms such as 'chairperson', euphemisms such as 'differently-abled', and to avoid gratuitous specification or otherwise discriminatory language.
- Some students may argue that PC is a useful tool to reflect current social values and ensure language appropriately reflects current beliefs:



‘The words we use can also reinforce current realities when they are sexist (or racist or heterosexist). Words are tools of thought. We can use words to maintain the status quo *or* to think in new ways—which in turn creates the possibility of a new *reality*.’

– Sherryl Kleinman, 12 March 2007, *Why Sexist Language Matters*

- Some students may argue that PC has gone too far:
  - It is more important to use plain language than to disguise discrimination through cloudy terms such as ‘differently-abled’
  - Replacing ‘baa baa black sheep’ to ‘baa baa rainbow sheep’ in order to avoid racial discrimination
  - Removal of golliwogs from classic Enid Blyton books due to the racial implications
  - Renaming ‘Dame Slap’ to ‘Dame Snap’ to avoid association with corporal punishment
  - Noddy’s friend Big Ears becoming banished from his own bed and the words ‘queer’ and ‘gay’ replaced by ‘odd’ and ‘happy’
  - A Victorian school principal changing the lyrics of ‘Kookaburra sits in the old gumtree’ to avoid the use of the lexeme ‘gay’
  - The case of Coles removing the biscuit names ‘Creole Creams’ to avoid accusations of racial stereotyping.

OR

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**Question 16** Tick the box next to the question you are answering.

‘During times of universal deceit, telling the truth becomes a revolutionary act.’  
– George Orwell

To what extent is public language manipulated to avoid telling the complete truth in contemporary Australian society?

- a. ‘Exciting homes, designed for a harmonious synergy of cutting edge architecture for those who applaud environmental sustainability in a perfect setting which preserves quality lifestyle as a measurable asset.’  
**The Noosa lifestyle property review of 3 February 2005**
- b. ‘In April 2003...[President George W.] Bush visited wounded soldiers from the war in Iraq: “I reminded them and their families,” he said, “that the war in Iraq is really about peace.”’  
**Nicholls, P. (2008) ‘Wars I Have Seen’, *A Concise Companion to Twentieth-Century American Poetry* (ed S. Fredman), Blackwell Publishing Ltd, Oxford, UK**
- c. ‘Modern-day politicians prove the continuing relevance of Orwell’s cautionary tale: Julia Gillard’s mindless motto “moving forward” and Tony Abbott’s monosyllabic mantra “great big new tax” reflect an authoritarian determination to narrow and deaden voters’ minds.’  
**Rob Forbes, *The Age*, 31 May 2011, ‘Corporate-speak sucks the life out of our education system’**
- d. ‘The problem with all of these techniques is that in the end people don’t look authentic and that is the ultimate crime in politics: it’s looking fake. And I think that’s what could well come back to destroy the politicians who are entirely driven by the kind of focus group market research tested phraseology. [T]here’s a big difference between trying to get your message across in the clearest and, dare I say it, the most palatable form and effectively trying to weave this web of semi deceit.’  
**Tony Abbott, *Beyond Spin*, ABC Television, 21 May 2009**

### Sample Response

It is important that students note the intricacies of this topic carefully: the words ‘public’ and ‘complete’ are significant. This topic requires students to address the use of language in contemporary Australian society, which means that examples should be taken, where possible, from recent Australian media.

This topic may be divided into paragraphs in a number of ways. They could be divided according to the specific technique used (e.g., doublespeak, euphemism, jargon) or the area of society in which we see the language used (e.g., advertising, military, politics, corporations, education etc.)

Knowledge of Orwell's writing, in particular his article *Politics and the English Language*, will assist students to grasp the breadth of possible responses to this topic.

Often students will tend to fall into the trap of being too general in their responses. There is an excellent array of examples to choose from both in and outside the stimulus material and it is vital that specific examples are given, and that they are analysed using precise metalanguage.

Some possible ideas students may explore are:

- Doublespeak, which may be comprised of a number of strategies working simultaneously, including:
  - Euphemism (casting ideas in a positive light and avoiding negative connotations, e.g., the 'Final Solution' coined by the Nazi regime to describe the massacre of millions of Jewish people during the Holocaust. Analysis of this example could note the connotations of 'Solution' as being a responsible, inevitable measure taken. However, note that the majority of examples must be original examples from Contemporary Australian society.)
  - Complex jargon (to appear credible and authoritative, as well as to confuse or alienate listeners – very common in advertising)
  - Circumlocution (talking around an issue to avoid a direct response to a question – we see politicians respond to questions with alternative answers, thus appearing assured, but carefully avoiding what is asked)
  - Syntactic complexity and lexical density (long, complex noun phrases with multiple pre-modifiers such as 'weapons of mass destruction related program activities' cause listeners to lose focus on the specific information)
  - Ready-made phrases or clichés (phrases devoid of real meaning, e.g., 'at the end of the day' or 'in due season').
- Advertising – specialised jargon can be used in the advertising industry for guiding the audience to seeing the merits of a particular product, regardless of the reality. This is also relevant in real estate through the frequent use of euphemistic language in order to highlight the potential of a property.
- People in positions of power (politicians or corporations) are able to hide truths, corrupt thought and maintain plausible deniability by using meaningless prose. In the government arena, doublespeak or managerial prose is utilised to obfuscate the audience, often obscuring intended meaning by complex syntactic structure. Emotive linguistic features that lend negative or positive connotations by mere association are used; as Orwell noted, such language 'gives solidity to pure wind'
- An example of backtracking and using euphemism to 'soften' the blow can be seen in Tony Abbott's infamous comments on ABC TV's *The 7.30 Report* in 2010. The opposition leader was asked to explain his past promise to abstain from introducing new taxes. He noted that this 'wasn't absolutely consistent' with his promotion of a

new paid parental leave tax on big business. Telling the ‘complete truth’ would have been to use the highly stigmatised lexeme ‘lie’. He instead disguises the reality of his two highly contradictory remarks and serves to obfuscate genuine communication.

- Passive voice constructions are often exploited by political writers as it allows for the exclusion of the subject or perpetrator, which in effect is able to shift responsibility and conceal truths. In the phrase ‘every effort was made...’ the people who made the effort are conveniently excluded, removing responsibility from a single person or organisation. Thus, through the employment of these strategies, people in power are able to obscure reality and control the impressions of the general populace in the process.
- Many were highly critical of the use of obfuscating language by bureaucrats during Victoria’s tragic Black Saturday fires in February 2009. Rather than giving ‘plain speak’ warnings, civilians were told by the CFA of ‘precise complex fire behavior information’ and ‘fire activity with potential to impact’. A CFA manager spoke of their task as being ‘value-adding’ and ‘populating the template’, with CFA documents being ‘iterative type documents’. At a time when coherent communication was vital for public safety, Don Watson affirmed that, ‘Victorians would [have been] better served if fire warnings were delivered in simple language.’

Some possible quotes related to political language and euphemism:

- ‘Political language has to consist largely of euphemism, question-begging and sheer cloudy vagueness. Defenceless villages are bombarded from the air, the inhabitants driven out into the countryside, the cattle machine-gunned, the huts set on fire with incendiary bullets: this is called *pacification*...Such phraseology is needed if one wants to name things without calling up mental pictures of them.’  
– **George Orwell, ‘Politics and the English Language’, 1946**
- “The phrase ‘war on terror’ may have reached its use-by-date. The Australian government has quietly started substituting ‘the war on terror’ with descriptions such as ‘the long struggle.’”  
– **ABC Radio Australia, 21 August 2007**
- ‘Military officials would not say why they had not earlier reported the Cuba camp incident, which they categorised as “self-injurious behaviour”, aimed at getting attention rather than committing suicide... An army spokesman claimed that in 2003 there were 350 “self-harm incidents”, including 120 “hanging gestures.”’  
– **BBC News report, ‘On mass-suicide attempts at Guantanamo Bay detention centre’, January 2005**

## Mark allocation

- **28–30** – Demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of the essay topic. Provides detailed discussion and supports key points with relevant examples or evidence. Excellent analysis using metalinguistic tools accurately. Tightly structured with confident and assured use of paragraphs and topic sentences. Extensive vocabulary and accurate grammar, spelling and punctuation.
- **24–27** – Demonstrates a good understanding of the essay topic. Provides detailed discussion and supports key points with relevant examples or evidence. Very good analysis using metalanguage. Well-structured and demonstrates skill in the use of paragraphs, topic sentences, vocabulary and accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation.
- **20–23** – Demonstrates a good understanding of the essay topic. Provides some detailed points of discussion and mostly supports these points with examples or evidence. Analysis of ideas is largely expressed in metalinguistic terms. Structure demonstrates appropriate use of paragraphs and topic sentences. Vocabulary and accurate grammar, spelling and punctuation are used correctly.
- **16–19** – Demonstrates some understanding of the topic. Provides some discussion and some points are supported by examples or evidence. Analysis is not sustained throughout the essay and metalanguage is used infrequently or incorrectly. Structure demonstrates appropriate use of paragraphs and topic sentences. Vocabulary and accurate grammar, spelling and punctuation are mainly used correctly.
- **12–15** – Demonstrates some understanding of the topic. Provides some discussion but the key points are often generalised, superficial or repetitive and often not supported with examples or evidence. More descriptive than analytical and metalanguage is rarely used or absent. Structure demonstrates some use of paragraphing and topic sentences. Vocabulary and accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation are used infrequently or inconsistently.
- **8–11** – Demonstrates a basic understanding of the topic. Provides limited discussion of two or three points which are not supported by examples or evidence. Descriptive rather than analytical and metalanguage is not used. Poor structure with little use of paragraphing and topic sentences. Vocabulary is basic and accurate grammar, spelling and punctuation are rarely used.
- **5–7** – Little understanding of the topic. Provides limited discussion of one or two points which are not supported by examples or evidence. Little or no analysis given and metalanguage is not used. Poorly structured writing with minimal use of paragraphing and topic sentences. Vocabulary is limited and accurate grammar, spelling and punctuation are rarely used or absent.
- **2–4** – No evidence of understanding of the topic. One or two points are mentioned but not supported by examples or evidence. No use of metalanguage. No use of paragraphs or topic sentences. Vocabulary is poor and accurate grammar, spelling and punctuation are mainly absent.
- **0–1** – No attempt is made to address the topic. Nothing, or only a few words, are written. No use of metalanguage, paragraphs and topic sentences. Accurate grammar, spelling and punctuation are absent.

## END OF SAMPLE RESPONSES BOOK